

Oct. 8 / Administration of George W. Bush, 2001

brought honor to themselves and have enriched our national life. In the beauty of this Capital City, we see the hand of Italian immigrants who spent more than 10 years carving the great seated figure in the Lincoln Memorial, who adorned the National Cathedral with statues, and who graced the dome and corridors of the Capitol building with magnificent art.

Our freedom itself was gained with the help of three Italian regiments that crossed the Atlantic to fight in the Revolutionary War. Our Declaration of Independence bears the signature of two Italian Americans. In later struggle, dozens of Italian Americans would receive the Medal of Honor. And today, when Americans pay tribute to "The Greatest Generation," we have in mind people like Captain Don Gentile, the fighting ace who General Eisenhower described as a "one-man air force."

Take any field of endeavor, any achievement of this country, and Italian Americans are part of it. For generation after generation, the success of our country has drawn heavily from the industry and resourcefulness of Italian immigrants and their families. The same can be said for the values that make us a great nation. The millions who came here brought with them a distinct strength of character, faith in God, devotion to family, and love of life.

This summer I visited Genoa, where 550 years ago Christopher Columbus was born.

All around that vibrant, modern city are glimpses of the ancient civilization that still inspires the world's admiration and always will. In so many ways, that culture has added to our own, first on three small ships, then on many more. It is our good fortune to be an immigrant nation, to be the keepers of traditions and gifts that have come to us from great nations like Italy. More than 15 million Americans claim Italian heritage. And all Americans have reason to be grateful, because we would be poorer without it.

I now have the singular honor of signing the official document proclaiming October 8th, 2001, as Columbus Day in the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:09 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to James Bonzano, battalion chief, Arlington County Fire Department; Joseph J. Esposito, chief, New York City Police Department; Daniel A. Nigro, chief, Fire Department-City of New York; Kathleen Ganci, widow of New York City Fire Department Chief Peter Ganci, Jr., and their children, Christopher, Peter III, and Danielle; Italian Ambassador to the United States Fernando Salles and his wife, Anna Maria; Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi of Italy; Gov. George E. Pataki of New York; and Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani of New York City. The proclamation is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks Following Discussions With Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder of Germany and an Exchange With Reporters *October 9, 2001*

The President. It's been my honor to welcome a great friend of America to the Oval Office again. Chancellor Schroeder came to talk about our war against terrorist activities. We had a great discussion.

First, I want to thank the Chancellor for his solidarity with the American people and his strong statement of support for the American people right after the evildeers struck on September the 11th. I also want to thank Chancellor Schroeder and the

German people for their outpouring of support for the victims.

And I also want to thank him for being a steadfast friend in a broad coalition that is determined to rout terrorism out where it may exist, to not only bring the Al Qaida organization to justice but to declare a broad campaign against terrorists and terrorism all across the world. There is no more steadfast friend in this coalition than Germany, and I'm proud to have him here.

We also talked about the Middle East and the importance that both of us recognize for that process to get into Mitchell as quickly as possible. The German Government has been very strong about working with both parties in the Middle East to get into Mitchell. I assured him we're doing the same thing. There would be no better stabilizer for our coalition than for the Mitchell process to begin in the Middle East.

But Mr. Chancellor, we're so thrilled to have you here. Thank you for coming.

Chancellor Schroeder. Thank you very much, indeed, Mr. President. I, obviously, very happily came here. And I'm pleased to be here, because it is important to us to show that—very much in these difficult times—friendship must prevail and does prevail. And I'm also here to express the deepest solidarity from the German side, which is not just words being said, but it's a fact.

We very much are in agreement about the fact that this fight against terrorism, which we are all involved in by now, must be a very comprehensive approach, indeed. The action that is being taken right now must be added to through political measures, through diplomatic action, too.

We also find it very important to maintain the strong degree of cohesion that we see at this point in time within the antiterror alliance that has formed around the world. We went on to agree that it was crucially important to dry up the financing for the terrorists. And we also find it very important to highlight that the ac-

tion that is presently being taken in Afghanistan is not at all directed against the people of Afghanistan; it is not at all directed against Islam; it is far rather directed against Usama bin Laden and the very ruthless regime behind him.

We have also very strongly emphasized how important we find it that we do provide relief for the refugees and cope with the refugee problem that will arise. And I can only yet again emphasize the high degree of respect that I feel vis-a-vis the United States of America and the American President, how he has gone about linking humanitarian aid and assistance up with the strike in this fantastic way he has done.

The President. Thank you, sir.

Military Action in Afghanistan/German Contribution

Q. Mr. President, how close are we to using U.S. ground troops in Afghanistan? And Mr. Chancellor, what extra commitments did you make of German military assets today to the United States cause?

The President. Well, first, I think the American people are beginning to realize that this is a unique type of war. The first shot we took in this war against terrorism was when we started cutting off their money. And I want to thank the German Chancellor and the German Government for cooperating and joining with us in not only sharing information but making it clear to Al Qaida and other terrorist groups, we're going to cut you off financially.

Secondly, as you know, we've started conventional operations. And I believe Secretary Rumsfeld summed it up pretty well today when he made it clear that the skies were now free for U.S. planes to fly without being harassed in any way and that the missions have been successful.

And as to whether or not we will put troops on the ground, I'm not going to tell you. I think it's—you've got to understand, we will not share intelligence, nor will we talk about military plans that we may or may not have in the future.

Chancellor Schroeder. I have—and you might remember me saying that—never excluded military contributions coming from the Federal Republic of Germany. We most obviously addressed this topic today. But as you might easily understand, it would be entirely unhelpful to spread this type of information. It would only help the enemy that we're trying to bring down. It is obvious that at the given point in time, details will be discussed in all friendship, and we'll come to good decisions.

Intelligence Briefings/Anthrax Exposures

Q. Mr. President, can you tell us what prompted you to write the memo to Congress about briefing on intelligence matters, why you think such restrictions are appropriate? And could you also address what threat you think these limited anthrax exposures pose more generally? Is it linked to terrorism at all?

The President. Well first, Mr. Chancellor, we had a—we had some security briefings take place up on Capitol Hill that were a discussion about classified information, and some of that information was shared with the press.

Chancellor Schroeder. Oh, we know that trouble. [Laughter]

The President. Oh, you know that trouble, too. [Laughter]

These are extraordinary times. Our Nation has put our troops at risk. And therefore, I felt it was important to send a clear signal to Congress that classified information must be held dear, that there's a responsibility, that if you receive a briefing of classified information you have a responsibility. And some Members did not accept that responsibility—somebody didn't. So I took it upon myself to notify the leadership of the Congress that I intend to protect our troops.

And that's why I sent the letter I sent. It's a serious matter, Dave [David Gregory, NBC News]; it's very serious that people in positions of responsibility understand

that they have a responsibility to people who are being put in harm's way.

I'm having breakfast tomorrow with Members of Congress. I will be glad to bring up this subject. I understand there may be some heartburn on Capitol Hill. But I suggest if they want to relieve that heartburn, that they take their positions very seriously and that they take any information they've been given by our Government very seriously, because this is serious business we're talking about.

And the second question about anthrax, that is serious as well. I want to first tell the American people that an incident obviously came up, in the form of a sick male who unfortunately passed away. And the local authorities, along with the CDC, responded very quickly. There is a system in place to notify our Government and governments in the case of some kind of potential biological incident or chemical incident. And the system worked. And now the system is even working better, because we have, in essence, gone into the building, cleaned the building out, taken all the samples as possible, and are following any trail, any possible trail.

So thus far, it looks like it's a very isolated incident. But any—any type of incident, any type of information that comes into our Government, we take very seriously, because we understand we're dealing with evil people. And as you know, I've assured the American people that life should go on as normal. But they also should know, the American people should know, that our Government is doing everything we can to make our country as safe as possible.

Steve [Steve Holland, Reuters].

Military Action in Afghanistan

Q. Mr. President, the Pakistani President says he was told that the bombing campaign would be relatively short. How long do you think it will take? And what do you say to some of these people in the

Islamic world who are protesting the campaign?

The President. Yes. Well, Steve, I don't know who told the Pakistani President that. Generally, you know, we don't talk about military plans. And there is one way to shorten the campaign in Afghanistan, and that's for the—Usama bin Laden and his leadership to be turned over so they can be brought to justice.

We will have a sustained effort. But I want to remind you that this is a part of a larger effort, that our war, the war of freedom-loving people, such as the Germans and the Americans, is against terrorists as a whole. And this is one part of a large campaign. We—the coalition has arrested over 200 people that have been associated with the Al Qaida organization. All around the world, freedom-loving people are gathering information, sharing information, and bringing people to justice.

And what was the second part of your question?

Protests in Islamic Nations

Q. The Islamic protesters. What do you say to those people?

The President. I say that if they think that the—first of all, I think the message of the Al Qaida organization is one of evil and hate. I understand people's willingness to protest, but they should not protest the decisions our coalition is making, because it is in the best interests of freedom and humankind.

Al Qaida and Nations Supporting Terrorism

Q. Do you still want him dead or alive?

The President. Ours is a compassionate nation, as is Germany. We're both combining our resources to help people in need. There are thousands of starving Afghans, because there is a Taliban Government in place that has caused starvation and deprivation and discrimination. And they are now housing terrorists. And make no mistake about it: The doctrine that says

if you house a terrorist, you're just as guilty as a terrorist, will stand. We're making that very evident to the world as we speak.

Q. Do you still want Mr. bin Laden dead or alive, sir?

The President. I want there to be justice. I want there to be justice. And it's Al Qaida, but it's anybody who feeds Al Qaida, who houses Al Qaida, who encourages Al Qaida. Any other terrorist organization that is affiliated with Al Qaida is just as guilty, as far as I'm concerned.

We're very patient people. The American people understand, and I know that the Chancellor understands, that this is a different kind of war. There's a certain sense of fascination with previous wars in Kosovo and Desert Storm, where people could turn on their TV screens and see high-tech weaponry burrowing into bunkers and massive explosions. This is a different type of war. There will be a conventional component to the conflict, but much of what takes place will never make it onto the TV screens. Much of the efforts that we talked about in the Oval Office will be efforts that you will never see until people are brought to justice. And therefore, there has to be a certain patience. I think the American people are beginning to understand that.

I will assure you that the people—the terrorists of the world will understand that I am determined and, having talked with the Chancellor, that he is determined to lend the resources of our Government to bring them to justice. If it takes one day, one month, one year, or one decade, we're patient enough, because we understand that the actions we take together are not only important for today but will say to future Chancellors or future Presidents, "Here is how we fight terrorism." We also understand the actions we take today will make it more likely that our children's children will be able to grow up in a free world.

The first shot of the new war of the 21st century was fired September the 11th.

The first battle is being waged, but it's only one of a long series of battles.

Yes, Bill [Bill Plante, CBS News].

Domestic Reaction

Q. Mr. President, as you noted on Sunday, there's a certain amount of nervous anxiety in the Nation, fear of new attacks, now that the military campaign has begun. Will the new Office of Homeland Security do anything concrete to recommend to average people, that they can do to protect themselves?

The President. Well, Bill, I think the—you know, the people of America should go about their business, should go about their daily lives, knowing full well that our Government, at all levels, is doing everything we can to disrupt any potential action and/or to provide the security necessary for people to travel, for example. I'm briefed every single morning about what somebody may or may not have heard and what actions are taking place. And their Government is responding as forcefully and actively as humanly possible.

One of the reasons why this coalition is so important is because we share information. When Germany hears something about something that may take place here and vice versa, we share information. And so, we're on high alert at the governmental level.

But the American people should go about their business. And people ought to travel. And people ought to feel comfortable going to see the mighty Houston Astros play. People ought to feel comfortable going about their lives, knowing that their Government is doing everything humanly possible to disrupt any potential activity that the evil ones may try to inflict upon us.

Intelligence Briefings

Q. Mr. President, when you meet with the congressional leadership tomorrow, will you be specific about what they can and

cannot relay back up to the Hill? Or do you just expect them not to relay anything?

The President. Well, I'm going to talk to the leaders about this. I have talked to them about it. I mean, when the classified information first seeped into the public, I called them on the phone and said, "This can't stand. We can't have leaks of classified information. It's not in our Nation's interests."

But we're now in extraordinary times. And I was in the—when those leaks occurred, by the way, it was right before we committed troops. And I knew full well what was about to happen. And yet, I see in the media that somebody, or somebodies, feel that they should be able to talk about classified information. And that's just wrong. The leadership understands that.

And if there's concerns, we'll work it out. I mean, obviously I understand there needs to be some briefings. I want Don Rumsfeld to feel comfortable briefing members of the Armed Services Committee. But I want Congress to hear loud and clear: It is unacceptable behavior to leak classified information when we have troops at risk.

I'm looking forward to reiterating that message. And we will work together. We've got a great relationship. Listen, the four leaders, with whom I have breakfast on a weekly basis, fully understand the stakes. They fully understand the decision I made. And they will have gotten feedback from their Members, and we will discuss it. But one thing is for certain: I have made clear what I expect from Capitol Hill when it comes to classified information.

Chancellor Schroeder. Let me add something. I hope that the German press corps did hear it. [*Laughter*]

President Vladimir Putin of Russia

Q. We did hear it, Mr. Chancellor. Mr. President, do you consider Russia's war in Chechnya to be, first, a war against terrorists? And has your view on that changed since September 11th?

The President. I've had very good conversations with Vladimir Putin about the war on terrorism. I know the Chancellor has, as well. I'm, as a matter of fact, going to be meeting with the President of Russia within 2 weeks, in Shanghai, and I'm looking forward to those meetings.

I have made it clear to him that I appreciate his strong statements about America's efforts and the coalition's efforts to fight terrorism where we find it. I also made it clear to him that he needs to respect minority rights within his country. And he listened very carefully, and I think he's appreciative that our message has been consistent. From the very first conversation I had with President Putin, I expressed concern about how his government was viewing the minority that exists and how they were being treated. So my position has been very consistent.

To the extent that there's Al Qaida organizations in his neighborhood, they need to be brought to justice, as well. And we look forward to sharing information with him, just like he's sharing information with us. He is—he was one of the first—I will tell you an interesting story.

I was airborne on Air Force One and put our—on September the 11th—and put our troops to a high-alert status. And one of the first phone calls I got through my national security office was from Vladimir Putin, announcing that he has stood his troops down—which is significant. In the old days, if we'd have put our troops on heightened alert, they would have put their troops on more heightened alert—[*laugh-*

ter—which would have caused our troops to go on higher alert. And all of a sudden we would have had a conflict, a potential conflict out of the realm of the incident that caused the troops to go on alert.

So he quickly called and said, "We're standing our troops down." It's a new attitude toward relationship. He understands the cold war is over, and so do I, which provides great opportunity for not only America but Germany to work with Mr. Putin for our nations' interests and his nation's interests.

And I think we're going to find a lot of common ground, one of which will be to fight terrorism. But as I explained to him, it's going to be hard to have common ground if he represses the press and/or treats minorities within his own country in a way that the Western world simply doesn't understand.

Listen, thank you all for coming. Thank you, Chancellor. I appreciate you, sir.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:45 p.m. in the Colonnade at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to anthrax victim Robert Stevens; President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan; Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; and President Vladimir Putin of Russia. He also referred to the Report of the Sharm el-Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee, chaired by former Senator George J. Mitchell, issued April 30. Chancellor Schroeder spoke in German, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Reporting on Combat Action in Afghanistan Against Al Qaida Terrorists and Their Taliban Supporters October 9, 2001

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

At approximately 12:30 p.m. (EDT) on October 7, 2001, on my orders, U.S. Armed

Forces began combat action in Afghanistan against Al Qaida terrorists and their Taliban supporters. This military action is a part